

### On the complement of the intensional transitive *want*

In a framework that decomposes *have*, *get* and *give* into a light verb and a P<sub>HAVE</sub>-complement ([<sub>VBE/BECOME/CAUSE</sub> P<sub>HAVE</sub>]), Harley (2004) says that apparent *want*+DP structures don't embed a null verb *HAVE/GET*, as in (1) (McCawley 1979), but just a null preposition P<sub>HAVE</sub> (i.e. not a [<sub>VBE/BECOME</sub> P<sub>HAVE</sub>] complement), (2). We show that this proposal makes wrong predictions, and argue that the nullness consists of more than just a P; specifically, of either *HAVE* or *GET*.

- (1) [<sub>VP</sub> Mary<sub>i</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> wants [<sub>XP</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> TO-HAVE/TO-GET [<sub>DP</sub> a car ]]]]] (≈ McCawley 1979)  
 (2) [<sub>VP</sub> Mary<sub>i</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> wants [<sub>PP</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> [<sub>P'</sub> P<sub>HAVE</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> a car ]]]]] (Harley 2004)

**Temporal Advs:** We assume correctness for the general spirit of Harley's own account of the double object construction [DOC] (Harley 2003, Beck/Johnson 2004), which assigns (3) the structure in (4). If the apparent *want*+DP construction and the DOC share the same structure—a verbal element embedding the P<sub>HAVE</sub>P—they should behave on a par. However, they behave differently with respect to temporal adverbials. Though the DOC allows result-state adverbials, showing that it contains a stative subevent (Piñón 1999), it disallows non-agreeing temporal adverbials, in contrast to the apparent *want*+DP structure, (5). (5a), but not (5b), contains two temporally independent events.

- (3) *John gave/sent Mary a book.*  
 (4) [<sub>VP</sub> John [<sub>V'</sub> CAUSE [<sub>PP</sub> Mary [<sub>P'</sub> P<sub>HAVE</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> a book ]]]]]  
 (5) a. *A week ago, John wanted your car yesterday.* (McCawley 1979)  
 b. \**A week ago, John sent/gave Mary the book yesterday.*

**Ellipsis:** (6) is ambiguous, presumably since two VPs in the antecedent provide two sites for VP-ellipsis. The fact that (7), with the apparent *want*+DP construction, is ambiguous in the same way is expected if its antecedent also contains, covertly, two VPs (Larson *et al* 1997). If, as Harley has it, the apparent *want*+DP construction is parallel to the DOC, we would expect (8) to be ambiguous too, but it is not.

- (6) *John wants to have more toys than Ben.* ambiguous:  
 (i) 'more toys than Ben has' (ii) 'more toys than Ben wants to have'  
 (7) *John wants more toys than Ben.* ambiguous  
 (8) *John gave Bill more toys than Ben.* only 'more toys than Ben gave Bill'

**Co-composition:** An NP such as *compliment* is fine under *get* and *want* but not under *have*:

- (9) a. *John got a compliment.*  
 b. *John wants a compliment.*  
 c. *#John has a compliment.* ((9a-c) from Harley 2004: 261)

Rejecting co-composition (whereby *compliment* can affect the interpretation of its selecting verb) for theoretical reasons, Harley (2004) says that one can only explain (9a-c) if *want* embeds not simply a null *HAVE* but only the part that *have* and *get* share: a null P<sub>HAVE</sub> (with no light verb). This conclusion seems flawed. Unlike *have*, *get* does combine with *compliment*, so we can posit a null *GET* (besides a null *HAVE*; cf. McCawley 1979). Contra Harley, this need *not* lead to co-composition; the aspectual make-up of the null *HAVE/GET* (just as that of the overt *have/get*) exerts selectional restrictions over the aspectual make-up of its complement. *GET/get* selects *compliment*, *HAVE/have* does not. In fact, (9a-c) show precisely the fact that the element under *want* exhibits aspectual properties in the way that only (the extended projections of) V's, but not P's, do.

**Proposal:** The ellipsis facts and the temporal-adverbial facts show that *want* takes a clausal complement, which includes a projection introducing a temporally independent event. With the co-composition objection argued away, we thus claim, with McCawley (1979), that apparent *want*+DP cases can contain either a null *HAVE* or a null *GET*. In fact, positing null versions of both *have* and *get* is even more plausible if, as Harley claims, *get* and *have* are indeed syntactically non-atomic; if P<sub>HAVE</sub> is null, why should the combination of the null P<sub>HAVE</sub> and the commonly null <sub>VBE/VBECOME</sub> be obligatorily overt?

## References

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